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articoli

Career Services as an institutional approach to employability

Il Career Service come approccio istituzionale per l'employability

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Abstract

This paper outlines the fundamentals underlying the study of Career Services in education. Starting from a historical reconstruction of experiences in the university and beyond, it describes the main approaches implemented during the 20th century at an academic level. In fact, the organizational models reflect the educational intention of these services, which are set up as pathways to support the development of individuals with a view to building their life project and aiding an effective transition to the world of work. For this reason, in a global contest in such rapid evolution, studying Career Services is a part of the broader challenges of higher education in line with the internationalization and interconnection of world scenarios. In fact, in the future, Career Services will increasingly be seen as a hub of connections and community engagement in which all the stakeholders can meet to create and exchange values and contribute to the social transformation of the world.

Keywords: employability; higher education; career service; transitions; connections.

Abstract

Il documento delinea i fondamenti alla base dello studio dei Career Service in educazione. Partendo da una ricostruzione storica delle esperienze universitarie e non solo, descrive i principali approcci attuati nel corso del XX secolo a livello accademico. I modelli organizzativi, infatti, riflettono l'intenzione educativa di questi servizi, che si configurano come percorsi di sostegno allo sviluppo delle persone in un'ottica di costruzione del progetto di vita e di efficace transizione verso il mondo del lavoro. Per questo motivo, in un contesto globale in così rapida evoluzione, lo studio del Career Service si riferisce alle più ampie sfide dell'Alta Formazione in linea con l'internazionalizzazione e l'interconnessione degli scenari mondiali. In futuro, infatti, il Career Service si pone sempre più come centro di connessioni e di coinvolgimento attivo nelle comunità, in cui tutti gli stakeholders hanno l'opportunità di incontrarsi per creare e scambiare valore con il fine di contribuire alla trasformazione sociale del mondo.

Parole chiave: employability; higher education; career service; transizioni; connessioni.

1. Introduction

What is the value of researching Career Services for adult education? The question is particularly interesting, especially given the primarily organizational-institutional dimension of the reflections in the literature (Federighi, 2018). The growing association between university and work (Harvey, 1999), which is corroborated in the transition to organizations of young graduates or in joint innovation projects, sees a confluence of the three main axes of Didactics, Research, and the Third Mission in Career Services. Indeed, Job Placement is a theme of strategic importance for the future of universities since it associates training with the professions, and technology transfer and innovation with production trends. Dealing with all of this requires not only an interest in the processes of placing graduates in the world of work, but more and more in the development of a process that is professional, where the career category is the way to go and the one already covered.

The category of *employability* (Yorke, 2006) and the literature on the policies aimed at its integration into the curriculum (Bloxham, 2004; Boffo & Fedeli, 2018; Harvey, 2004; Yorke & Knight, 2006) represent the reference point. In this respect, Career Services are a bridge between the innovation processes of the third mission, in close synergy and in constant and intimate contact with the sector of technology transfer, relationships with the territory and the business world, on the one hand, and curricular paths, on the other (Boffo, 2018). The link with the academic training process is then the background onto which each action is grafted. It is through these lenses that we can look at models and approaches to Career Services not only from the perspective of a service to students, but in a broader view that considers people's personal and professional life-project.

2. A Brief History of Career Services

The relationship between education and work emerged as early as the end of the 19th century (Peck 2004). The end of the Victorian age marked a new approach for administration which was incrreasingly oriented towards the social dimension, including the offer of services for careers. It is interesting to note that the UK's 1902 Education Act set the first foundations for the establishment of an institutional subject that dealt with work advice. At the same time, it is equally important to underline that the approach began from an educational perspective (Peck, 2004).

The advent of this approach at an institutional level saw a parallel development of the Universities themselves both in the United Kingdom and in the USA (Bao, 2011). Although they traditionally relied upon their graduates entering a prescribed group of occupations, they nevertheless invested in Placement-oriented services called Appointment Boards (UK) or Placement Offices (USA). However, this was originally more like a mentoring or recommendation for particularly brilliant graduates than complete support for the entire student population. Herr, Rayman and Garis wrote in this regard: "this was primarily a male activity, an old boy's network, by which a faculty member would speak on behalf of a student or persons of importance who might employ him as a favour to, or out of respect for, the professor." (Herr et al., 1993, p. 1)

In this viewpoint, placement was initially arranged as a rite of passage (Herr et al., 1993) from the status of student to that of professional thanks to the sponsorship of a professor. Over time, as we can see, the transition from university to work became less and less an act of mentoring or networking at the level of individual professors to move towards a

centralized institutional role, implemented for all students and not merely for those lucky enough to have the right contact (Herr et al., 1993).

Taking a look at the historical evolution in the United Kingdom, the first Career Service was organized at the University of Oxford in 1892, at Cambridge in 1914 and, then, another nine universities between the two World Wars followed suit. Not until the 1950s and 1960s did the office became a common structure in all institutions, as underlined by the 1963 Robbins Report and the 1964 Heyworth Report (Watts 1996; 1997). In fact, Heyworth provides a cogent overview of the origin of these services and a searching analysis of the types of activity carried out in those years.

The main activities of the Appointment Boards involved three areas:

- advisory interviews;
- provision of information on careers, employers and jobs;
- placement activities, including notifying students of vacancies, and arranging selection interviews between students and employers (Watts, 1996).

The professionals involved initially had a degree in economics or education (although not always specifically in guidance). The service centre primarily focused on job interviews as a tool for counseling and preparation for entering the world of work. However, for many students, the only elements of interest were the job search and the consultation of vacancies (Bao, 2011; Watts, 1996; 1997). In this regard, one of the most successful initiatives was dubbed "the milk rounds" (Watts, 1996, p. 81), in which job interviews were organized with a series of companies, normally in spring.

The Heyworth Report of the late 1960s recommended consolidating the consultancy service, suggesting a quantitative increase and a quality growth in staff. In addition, much attention was given to the organization of the spaces "since much of the work is of a confidential and private nature and therefore requires a fairly large number of separate rooms, so that conversations can be carried on without any likelihood of being overheard" (ibid.).

As Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey have stated "career services in higher education have a long and venerable history. In many ways, the evolution of these services reflects the evolution of the field in general as services evolved from an orientation toward Job Placement to a full range of career planning services being offered to meet the needs of diverse student populations." (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005, p. 397)

This expansion also meant a change in the students' socio-cultural background and produced an enlargement of the areas of work which graduates intended to enter. Moreover, they were planned with a strong vocational approach, in which the orientation was mainly offered by a lecturer rather than a specific service. It was these factors that prompted the Appointment Boards to start moving towards today's Careers Services. This transformation meant a change in the relationship with research departments and teachers too (Watts, 1996). Furthermore, it generated new approaches to the training and professional preparation of both students and graduates (Watts, 1997). In particular, there were three central aspects in the shakeup towards the current Careers Service approach:

- the impact of counseling in the management of services;
- the growth of career education;
- the move towards an open-access approach (Watts, 1996).

Rather than the emergence of counseling emphasizing the guidance interview as a tool to support decision-making, the new approach to career education invested more attention in transversal skills (Cavaliere & Lombardi, 2018). This period saw the development of theories and methodologies of facilitation and acceleration, from individual work to a greater range of group services aimed also at acquiring ECTS credits (from one-day courses to five-day courses) (Watts, 1996). These activities progressively grew in the 1980s, with a particular emphasis in colleges and polytechnics. In more recent times, Career Services have started to review their operating procedures, following the technological innovations of the last decades. Specifically, the students' growing need to access information and resources has led to a redesign of the training offer giving access to a broad range of tools, information, materials or videos so as to favour individual pathways to prepare for future work. Watts noted (in 1996) that organizational changes were directly reflected in the architectural structure too. In fact, if initially there was a small reception area that preceded a certain number of separate rooms occupied by individual advisors, the changes in the mode of educational delivery led to open spaces for the consultation of materials as well as individual workplaces for students, and of course some areas for one-on-one interviews.

What appears interesting in Watts's studies is the connection with the learning dimension and, therefore, with the teaching departments that often end up being responsible for students' career planning (Vernick, Garis & Reardon, 2000). As shown by research carried out in the United Kingdom (Watts, 1996), more than 84% of the professors interviewed believed that career orientation was an integral part of their work. It is for this reason that we can sometimes observe an overlapping of roles between departments and Career Services. In fact, the emergence of approaches to careers education increased the demand from students and, on account of this, given the limited number of specialist staff available, Career Services were not always able to fulfil the high demand for training activities. Accordingly, cooperation with the much more numerous academic staff helped the dissemination of guidance services to the student population.

The USA saw a similar development of services for employability. Yale was the first university to establish an office for graduate placement in 1919 offering professional guidance and matching opportunities with employers (Herr et al., 1993). The trend was to separate the placement offices from other functions related to student development (Bao, 2011): the former emphasizing the skills for a job search, such as the ability to write a CV or to successfully pass a job interview and therefore they were mainly addressed to students about to take their degree; the latter, instead, tended towards approaches to do with counseling and education and were therefore more focused on student development, emotional management of the academic pathway, and on the university experience itself (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey 2005). This division was rearranged between the 1950s and 1960s, when on-campus organizations were set up for career planning and the management of graduate placement. As Bao (2011) stated, "this shift reflected an expanded perspective of career services that moved beyond a single focus on placement to developmental perspective of career planning. Placement was now viewed as the best activity in the career of higher education." (Bao, 2011, p. 27)

In connection with this focus, the study by Farouk Dey and Christine Y. Cruzvergara (2014) from Stanford University provides an interesting overview of the evolution of these services. As Figure 1 shows, the authors identified six different phases in the journey from the early twentieth century to today.

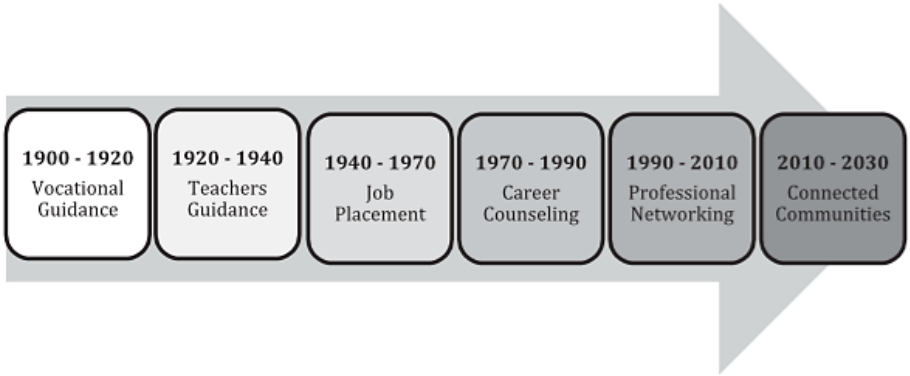

Figure 1. Evolution of Career Services in the USA. Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, p. 6.

Before the appearance of specific centres on individual college campuses, faculties assumed responsibility for mentoring and vocational guidance for students to prepare them for the workplace (1900-1920) (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Rayman & Garis, 1993). The first office mentioned was in Boston at the Frank Parson Career Centre under the name the Vocations Bureau (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). Just after WWI (1920-1940), which saw major industrialization across the country, there was a gradual influx of students which increased the need for new teachers to equip themselves with specific orientation skills.

However, it was only after WWII that the US higher education scenario evidenced further changes. The economic boom and the huge growth in the demand for workers, together with the necessity of relocating war veterans, accelerated the process of transformation towards a new paradigm oriented to Job Placement (1940-1970) (Herr et al., 1993). In fact, in these years, the university centres increasingly focused on matching the interests and skills of graduates with the demand for skills from employers (Kretovics, Honaker & Kraning, 1999).

In the following two decades (1970-1980 and 1980-1990), higher education gradually moved towards a developmental model that placed the responsibility for learning outcomes on students in a situation which, at the same time, saw a slump in the economy and growing competition for employment vacancies (Kretovics et al., 1999). This approach encouraged students to take the reins of their professional development and subsequent job search. As Herr et al. said: "while matching, brokering, or placement continued to be a part of a process of dynamic process of learning and self-concept development that needed to precede placement. Self-acceptance and self-understanding as the basis for which educational and occupational alternatives could be related." (Herr et al., 1993, p. 15)

For this reason, Career Services returned to an offer that was more linked to guidance and counseling, thus shifting their gaze towards the preparation of students within the educational pathway. Then came the boom in technological innovations (1990-2000 and the following decades) which affected the transition between education and work, with an impact also on the structure of Career Services. This constituted a driver of change that "helped re-engage career centres in employer relations and helped transform them into a comprehensive career […] [which] facilitated the relationship between students and employers through various networking career events and recruiting activities" (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, p. 8).

Both recruitment software and the dissemination of the social media have had an important effect on the way students attribute meaning to their experience and come into contact with

companies. At the same time, we can observe a contraction in the funds made available to universities, with a consequent shift of attention to placement results: in fact, the budget requests advanced by Career Services to academic governance have influenced the shift from an approach based on the measuring the results of accessing the services to an assessment of employment results at the end of studies (Lehker & Furlong, 2006).

In this scenario, the models implemented at the various universities on an international level can be many and varied. If the trend is to respond to socio-economic changes with an impact on generational trends, Career Services will become more and more like advanced centres for innovation and understanding the future. For this reason, research and analysis will play an increasingly crucial role in understanding the main lines that career development services must follow.

3. Career Services as an Educational Centre in University Institutions

If the role of the university has seen an autonomous independent evolution over the years, Career Services, as a structure based on a relationship with the outside, cannot be exempt from a transformative relationship with the contextual dimension. For this reason, the development of professional identity (Lehker & Furlong, 2006) acquires a particular value in the processes of orientation and training for work. Mismatches have been perceived between student expectations and realities of graduate work, and the implications of those realities for students' perceived career options (Lehker & Furlong, 2006). However, the reality of the labour market is frequently at odds with the wishes of recent graduates. This has important repercussions on the personal and professional outlook of young adults, involving crucial aspects such as the construction of their future and the pedagogically understood educational process. It is to respond to these critical issues, which refer to the challenges linked to the university-work mismatch (OECD, 2016), that career guidance services have found themselves liaising between degree courses and businesses. The aim is to respond to the specific needs of both parties with a view to supporting the growth of the country, local territories, companies, and individuals.

Often, in fact, the main impulses come from a process of institutional agenda setting, which frequently insists on issues such as the development of employability, support for companies, and the involvement of employers within universities. Looking at the first aspect, the building of students' employability has been prominent in the United Kingdom since 1998 thanks to the impulse of the Department for Education and Employment, which, through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), suggested measuring the employment outcomes of universities. In this regard, a circular published in 2000 included among its five national priorities "promoting innovation in the curriculum, particularly activity to increase the employability of graduates and diplomats, including work experience and developing key skills" (Watts & Butcher, 2008, p. 2). This led to the creation of the Enhancing Student Employability Coordination Team (ESECT), whose work led to a pedagogical and educational investigation of the concept of employability (Yorke, 2006; Yorke & Knight, 2006), which resulted in a large number of papers and publications. As the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills confirmed in 2008: "we want to see all universities treating student employability as a core part of their mission. So we believe it is reasonable to expect universities to take responsibility for how their students are prepared for the world of work." (p. 6)

However, these policy statements led to an assortment of organizational approaches at university level (Watts, 1996, 1997; Watts & Butcher, 2008). Given the multiplicity of contextual needs and institutional approaches, the most effective direction to plan such services is still unclear. In view of this, it is necessary to build a targeted offer, which cannot therefore be standardized at every level. According to the "no one-size-fits-all" principle, (Lehker & Furlong, 2006, p. 75; Yorke & Knight, 2006, p. 13), what works in one university may be impractical and unworkable in another due to a variety of factors. What each Career Service is called upon to do is therefore centred on the planning of services tailored to its own students and territory of reference, based also on the available personnel, economic resources, and specific skills (Hayden & Ledwith, 2014).

Given this basic variety, there are a number of guidelines for the construction of a Career Service's offer. Lehker and Furlong (2006) identify four of them (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Organizational models for Career Services, Lehker & Furlong, 2006, p. 75.

The first describes a centralized approach to services, in which both students and graduates can take advantage of the offer directly on-campus through counselling, matching, job fairs, training and many other resources that can be adapted to their individual needs. The second approach is a model structured directly by the academic units, either at the level of a single department or at the level of groups of departments. A third perspective takes both of the previous models and combines them. Lehker and Furlong (2006) defined this organization as "Campus Collaborations", which mixes the two points of view by including both a centralized office and individual departmental units. The fourth guideline suggested is the Developmental Approach, in which, regardless of the way in which career services are structured, they fit into the broad context of the offer to support students' life and development (Lehker & Furlong, 2006).

The diversity of the models, illustrated here as an example of the wide range of architectures offered by the international scene, nonetheless suggests following a comprehensive direction (Cheung, 2012) that can integrate the services with the broadest and most constitutive mission of university education and that makes career development the bridge between teaching and learning, research and the world of work (Fedeli, Frison & Grion, 2017; NACE, 2014; Vernick et al., 2000). As Vernick et al. (2000) pointed out, Career Services are increasingly becoming a "Teaching Career Centre" (p. 11) which indicates the intrinsic links between service, teaching, and research. In fact, "as a result of the connection between these three areas of activity, the quality of services provided is

augmented, and research and teaching benefit from practical application and analysis in a real service delivery setting." (Vernick et al., pp. 11-12)

This foreshadows a particular attention to the personalization of the service, which cuts across the professional perspectives of the sector, the territory, and the actors involved. In a globalized era aiming at internationalization and innovation, graduates' career paths are strongly differentiated from one another even within the same field. In order to make individualized programmes possible and effective, it is necessary to tailor the offer, through an ability to stay within a process of care (Boffo, 2018) for those who enter Job Placement. The professional interpersonal relationship with each student is an essential condition for the success and effectiveness of the transition to work. Although this is particularly complex in institutions with large numbers, it is still a point to strive for in order to expand the preparation and mentoring, and to increase the service quality.

A further element of support comes from technology which, with the developments of the recent decades, has provided more and more tools to maintain effective relationships at a distance between universities, students and businesses (Genz, 2014). While the use of electronic platforms to manage internships and selection is increasingly widespread (Rota, 2014), the vast range of ICT solutions is also an effective means for Career Development. To cope with the exponential growth of users, since the end of the '90s, many centres have implemented forms of blended learning to deliver modules aimed at career planning. These schemes have also achieved excellent results, as demonstrated by some studies as well as interesting international research experiences (Hoover, Lenz & Garis, 2013; Neary, Dodd & Hooley, 2015).

The trend towards the creation of transnational networks between Career Services, also driven by national and international public funding, is a key element to be taken into consideration in recent decades. The openness of the interdependence between labour markets and the ever-increasing trend towards mobility between countries, also favoured by the underlying European framework, have obliged Job Placement to review its scope of action well beyond a purely territorial outlook. As Christian Genz, director of the Careers Service at the Technische Universität Chemnitz, has said, the transition to a Transnational Career Service (Genz, 2014) is necessary because of the removal of barriers in the world of work itself. While the international dimension represents a frontier for the management of career services, it is also a potential driver for attracting funding to support daily activities (Genz, 2014; Reiche, 2014; Watts & Butcher, 2008). Although the Third Mission is increasingly coming into full swing as one of the strategic elements of university activity, it is not yet perceived as a core business by universities (Genz, 2014). As was well illustrated by Genz (2014), "Career services and many other institutions, like alumni services, start-up support, etc. are not part of the two traditional pillars of research and teaching. They are not part of the administration either. As a result, there is no traditional budget to rely on and sometimes no understanding why a career service should be paid for at all. Especially during times of budget cuts, career services do not have a lot of internal support – they are merely nice to have." (p. 144)

For this reason, one of the ways out of this critical situation is to access projects financed at a national or international level, to make training or personnel resources operating within the structure sustainable (Inman, Sowby, White, Ward, Kraft & Reilly, 2011). In addition to the economic dimension, the projects funded, usually for three years (Reiche, 2014), give the opportunity to test and implement new measures and also invest in the growth of staff skills (Contomanolis, Cruzvergara, Dey & Steinfeld, 2015). Nevertheless, this mode of governance has its critical points, due mainly to the medium-term sustainability of

activities that although enjoying a certain consolidation, find themselves without any impetus to continue at the end of the three years (Inman et al., 2011). If one of the solutions can include (cyclical) participation in other projects, this may nevertheless entail the risk of a transformation of the Career Service into a Career Projects Service (Genz, 2014).

The placing of Career Services among a variety of organizational areas (Candia & Cumbo, 2015) fully shapes it as a hub for internal and external relations at the university, as was well illustrated by Genz (2014). In this regard, Hayden and Ledwith (2014) have considered external relations both from an on-campus and off-campus perspective (Figure 3). All of this affects the mission and objectives of a Career Service, since "Career services must advance the mission of the institution as well as support academic and experiential learning programmes to promote student learning and student development. Within this context, the primary purpose of career services is to assist students and other designated clients in developing, evaluating, and/or implementing career, education, and employment decisions and plans. [Moreover], career services must work collaboratively with academic divisions, departments, individual faculty members, student services, employers, and other relevant constituencies of the institution to enhance students' career development." (NACE, 2014, pp. 6-7)

On-Campus Partners	**Off-Campus Partners**
Faculty	Educational Institutions
Academic Advising	Employers
Civic Engagement	Community Members
Alumni	

Figure 3. Career Service external relations. Author's elaboration from Hayden & Ledwith, 2014, pp. 81-92.

On the internal side, the Career Centre has first of all the responsibility of developing a close relationship with the teaching staff. The faculty is the first link with the students and the main partner with whom to establish an effective strategy for work orientation (Hayden & Ledwith, 2014). For this reason, intermediation structures can be defined that act as a link between the Career Service and the Departments: in fact, we know that the culture of work and career prospects among students is also built through the points of view of those who guide the teaching. Collaborating then means identifying occasions when actions aimed at career development are integrated into the curriculum or lessons, perhaps through the awarding of credits (Hayden & Ledwith, 2014; Yorke & Knight, 2006).

Dissemination of culture is one of the other aspects that the Career Service should aim at in order to facilitate the building of connections between actors (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). Civic Engagement, intended as an opportunity for service or volunteering, is increasingly taking shape as a form of experiential learning aimed at the development of soft skills (Melacarne, 2018). In this respect, collaboration with non-profit institutions and associations is clearly strategic also from a Service Learning perspective (Jacoby, 2015).

Keeping an eye on the inside, the Alumni Association, of the Anglo-Saxon tradition and increasingly widespread in Italian universities, is often the first point of reference for a former student who is unemployed or looking for a new position (Hoover, Lenz & Garis, 2013). In the model of connections developed by Dey and Cruzvergara (2014) it is clear that informal links and networking (also via the web) are a fundamental means to learn about trends and opportunities in their sector.

Looking outwards, it is the educational institutions (public and private), as well as the local primary and secondary schools, that are a strategic point of contact for a Career Service

that accompanies the students' educational process (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). In fact, we can note "a paradigm shift in career services that focuses on the comprehensive delivery of services to students for the duration of their undergraduate education." (Garver, Spralls & Divine, 2009, p. 2)

4. Conclusions: a Future-Oriented Career Service

The important reconstruction work carried out by Dey and Cruzvergara (2014) allows us to trace some interesting scenarios for the future of Career Services. It is clear that the main innovations and new organizational structures are being supported in those countries, such as the United Kingdom and the USA, where the tradition of career services had already taken root. Thanks to the internationalization of research and the ever-increasing global interconnection, these trends are also arriving in Europe, albeit still faint-heartedly received. In addition to all of this, the economic crisis that has swept through many countries worldwide since 2008 has certainly accelerated this process of transformation of Job Placement consistent with the changes in the world of work (Federighi, 2018; Ito & Howe, 2016; Moretti, 2012). In fact, the demand for accountability by students, parents, alumni, policy makers and, in some cases, even by academic governance itself is pushing towards a paradigm shift (Teichler, 2015). In this regard, the reference model for many actors is that of Stanford University, effectively systematized by Farouk Dey and Christine Cruzvergara (2014), which stresses a shift "from the traditional transactional model of career services toward a customized connection model that promises specialized career development support to students and meaningful connections to internship and employment opportunities as well as mentoring and experiential learning" (p. 8). In this scenario where multiple political and academic actors accentuate the importance of employability development for personal and professional growth (Boffo & Fedeli, 2018; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014; OECD, 2016; Yorke & Knight, 2006), the goal is to build a state-of-the-art Career Centre. Although the offer of counseling, CV support and job matching will still be maintained, the scope of action is opening up to the construction of connections through specific partnerships with a number of business actors; alongside all of this, new forms of training support are beginning, thanks also to the introduction of experiential learning, mentoring and community building methods for a network of support and shadowing at work.

The importance that Job Placement activities are acquiring also within ministerial documents (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014) is a sign of the increase in the strategic recognition of an activity that involves the recruitment of graduates, as well as student retention with respect to university courses themselves. It is for this reason that many universities are investing resources in the enrichment of specialized offices as well as allocating efforts and incentives in the dissemination of a culture of training for work. This is particularly visible in the USA (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014), but there are also movements at a European level including Italy (Candia & Cumbo, 2015). Underlining the centrality of an approach to employability then means shifting the orientation from the sole activity of placement (from graduation to work) towards a perspective of professional development involving the construction of identity, the creation of connections, and the acquisition of skills and capabilities for work and for life. The activity delivered by ANPAL, the Italian National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies, pursues the same aims. From 2015, with its institution, the team that operates in the Higher Education Unit started developing a research-based approach to Job Placement policies. Workshops and

networking seminars were offered to all universities to create a common framework for Career Service approaches: the implementation of a specialized community of Career Service experts and professionals has created opportunities for exchanging future perspectives and macro-trends. Moreover, the report *Linee guida per lo sviluppo e il rafforzamento dei Career Service* (Montefalcone, 2018) was also published in 2018 to share good practices and to suggest effective ways to bolster students' transitions to the labour market. One of the tasks of the National Agency should be to transform these policy statements into specific measures and funding for projects and research activities that could bring out the importance of supporting transitions and creating good connections. This is specifically crucial for a context like Italy, in which the relationship between universities and organizations is young and still not well-structured.

The training process for employability demands an openness to the world and to relationships. In an ever-changing work environment subject to profound changes, including sudden ones, the ability to build a personalized community, interwoven with a multiplicity of relationships, is the precondition for an effective service even in the medium term. For this reason, increasingly the panel of reference stakeholders extends well beyond students and employers: parents, alumni, proprietors, teachers, public administrators, local institutions, associations and social actors are all an active and integral part of that element of interest which is the work and growth of social cohesion (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014).

In order to successfully achieve this mission, the role of those who work within the services on a daily basis is crucial. While it is clear that each institution's needs differ and inevitably reflect the social and economic conformation of a local territory, it is also problematical to identify a single organizational model that can meet all individual needs. What can be traced instead is the profile of those staff members who follow, organize and offer career training activities. It is not simply a question of recruiting staff with consolidated experience, but rather of identifying professionals with "the right mindset and perspective, the right skill and interests, and the ability to be flexible and to adapt" (Contomanolis et al., 2015, p. 2). Working in the Career Service of a future based on connections and a sense of community means being facilitators of learning for groups, synthesizers of information, and builders of networks and relationships that include the social media. As Contomanolis et al. (2015) said in an article published on the website of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)[1]: "they must be approachable, engaging, and responsive. They must be strategic, politically savvy, relationship-building change agents. And if that isn't enough, they must be both specialists and generalists, with the ability to customize their effort to the need of diverse stakeholders and to wear multiple hats in fast-paced, demanding roles. In short, we believe that career service staff must transform their roles into educators who complement the work of their faculty partners rather than transactional service providers." (p. 2)

Accentuating these aspects means imagining a new educational professionalism to be included in the Career Service. This would inevitably have an impact not only on the training of internal staff, but also on the processes of recruitment and selection. The proposed vision assigns a crucial task to internal staff, with a view to complementing the role of the faculty in the process of educating students. The challenge, according to the

[1] Established in 1956, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) connects more than 8,100 career service professionals and nearly 2,000 universities and colleges within the United States, as well as creating partnerships between universities and recruitment professionals (http://www.naceweb.org/about-us/).

authors, is to attract and develop talent – also internally, building the leaders of tomorrow over time. Their task is no longer to make operations work, but to focus on what is happening outside, on what stakeholders are developing and to link the activities and range of services with the new trends around the world: for this reason, it has been underlined that "leadership in career services today requires individuals who are highly effective communicators who can build momentum and foster buy-in for needed strategic initiatives" (Contomanolis et al., 2015, p. 3). If people are increasingly the centre of business innovation processes, the same should apply to public or private university organizations. In the same way, the role of the manager is also changing. Given the central role of the Career Service in internal and external relations, it will gradually take on a higher-ranking profile, assuming the role of director or a figure within strategic governance. The connection with the stakeholders, and with the territory in the broadest sense, will allow this function a broad overview, capable of contributing to the decision-making lines of change (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014).

Opening this direction to the connected communities model of Dey and Cruzvergara (2014) casts a different light on the effects in terms of employability (Yorke, 2006). This is why the Career Service is configured not only as a hub, where different subjects meet, but as a genuine ecosystem, a presence that permeates the institutional culture and operational experience (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). This means that the students' personal and professional success becomes the shared responsibility of the entire academic community, from those responsible for placement to those who deal more strictly with teaching, research or other areas of the university organization. It is here that the so-called Third Mission finds one of its most fruitful branches and it is here that one can understand Chan and Derry's declaration: "the traditional concept of Career Services must die" (Chan & Derry, 2013, p. 22). Training for career development, to ensure that students and graduates have a fulfilling and fulfilled life, should be a goal of every member involved in university life. Orientation, from entry, continuing as mentoring during studies, to support on leaving, and the eventual career should be an entrenched process capable of making the Career Centre almost superfluous (Bloxham, 2004). Taking care of the development of employability and the transition to work of its graduates means taking a look at employability as the top level of the university education process, as a result of a path of change and transformation. Meanwhile, placement itself should be conceived as a result of a training process: "we should not worry only about what and how our students learn, we should be worrying about where they will apply what they have learned. [This] is also a theme that touches on education for citizenship" (Boffo, Gioli, Del Gobbo & Torlone, 2017, pp. 191-192). The curriculum-embedded approach could lead to many new perspectives, from the integration of career-oriented MOOCs to prepare for the transition, to the application of artificial intelligence to job matching services.

This trend has a clear impact on the indicators to measure the success of the services offered. The accountability for destinations and post-graduate results requires a different view of the entire system. Building employability not only expresses involvement within the curriculum, but the creation of a surrounding environment capable of bringing meaning and perspective to the transition in a perspective of mutual collaboration (Teichler, 2007). Here the theme clashes strongly with the recessive dynamics of the economy and with the problems linked to the collapse of employment in certain sectors and to the extremely high demand for labour in the technological area. Having the employability of young adults at heart means taking care of all these aspects, within an organizational strategy that builds relationships with companies and between these and the students, that offers training opportunities inside and outside the degree courses, that also knows how to indicate

alternative solutions linked to enterprise and innovation. In short, a Career Service that looks to the future of education and employment, able to connect them to help improve the lives of young students, future graduates and future workers.

Stanford University has taken important steps in this direction to support the bridge between training and students' wishes in order to achieve meaningful work for an individual life project. Operating to this end entails a paradigm shift, in line with the economic, demographic and technological evolutions of the global context. In fact, Stanford changed its traditional Career Development Centre into BEAM: Bridging Education, Ambition and Meaningful Work (Dey, 2017). The vision that drives this change in strategy is based around the centrality of transitions and connections. Professional development passes through meaningful educational and learning experiences, both inside and outside the university, during and after the students' course of studies, always looking to the future in a lifelong perspective. Stanford's BEAM director, Farouk Dey, has developed a new model based on connections that create communities, open opportunities, and generate meaning (Figure 4).

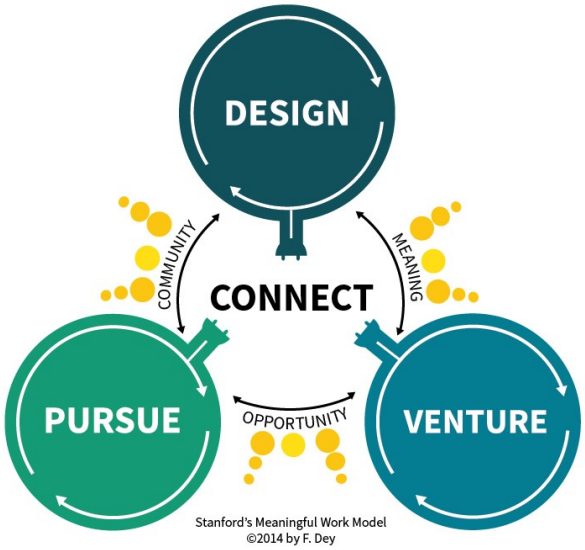

Figure 4. BEAM: Bridging Education, Ambition and Meaningful Work. Dey, 2017, p. 1.

In detail, Dey (2017) describes the types of strategic connections to focus on:

- *connections with employers*: in order to diversify internship and employment opportunities for students and alumni, Stanford Career Education is investing in career coaches who have industry expertise and experience in connecting students to a wider variety of jobs and internships. […];
- *connections with student and faculty communities*: in order to increase specialized support for students, and in partnership with academic advisors, career coaches are assigned to student communities based on their academic majors and degrees. […];
- *connections with mentors and experiences*: in order to increase students' learning from experiences and mentors, Stanford Career Education is investing in mentoring, networking, and experiential learning programmes.

This new approach will help students to cope better with the transition to a career path, thanks to the consolidated relationships and professional experiences had during the years of academic training (Dey, 2017). Nevertheless, a research-based approach in measuring

the result of Career Education actions is still not highly developed in Higher Education systems, especially in Italy, which lacks a long tradition in Job Placement services and labour market links (Candia & Cumbo, 2015; Montefalcone, 2018). This is why one of the future aims of this field will be to focus on creating a stronger link with academic research to show the impact and effectiveness of those programmes. Some works have already been published to identify a policy-making framework (Boffo & Fedeli, 2018), however the topic has not yet spread throughout the academic community.

These suggestions represent a change in standpoint which involves the entire university sphere, from learning to daily student life. The Career Service of the future, therefore, must guide the educational process of young adults (Montefalcone, 2018). As Dey himself said, "we educate, rather than place people in jobs" (Dey, 2017, p. 1). Occupational integration is merely the result of an educational pathway aimed at cultivating personal skills and weaving networks between subjects and contexts, in an attempt to go beyond the pre-established roads. In fact, working towards meaningful work requires reflection that is deep as well as personalized, on the dimension of meaning and the horizon that each individual intends to aim for. In this way, all the actors become involved, from students to employers and alumni, without forgetting their families and home communities. Thus, the role of the career educator of the future will increasingly be to build networks and connect people with the opportunities of the ecosystem and with the needs of a wide range of interpreters (Dey, 2017). It will be the role of an enzyme of training processes, capable of catalysing thrusts, projects, reactions, innovations that look beyond the present towards new paths that are perhaps still unexplored.

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